



Pasture for Life at Conygree Farm... In practice



Grassland restoration

The farm was entered into the Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) scheme (with Organic Entry Level) in 2010.

The main focus is the species rich grassland restoration work on 45Ha. Half the fields were reseeded with native grasses and wild flowers, half have been left to naturally regenerate. We need low nutrient levels (P and K indices of 0 or 1) so no fertilisers can be applied, and herbicide use is a definite no. Thistles and docks are controlled by hand weeding. Where hay is taken we leave it until late July/early August so that plants set seed. If we feed hay outside in the winter we only use our own species rich hay.

Grassland restoration is a long-term (30 year) project. We are seeing some wonderful results already with three types of orchid popping up and scabious, self-heal, vetch, cowslip and birds foot trefoil are abundant. Every field is different.

Our cattle and sheep (and insects and skylarks) love the sweet and diverse summer sward. However, winter grazing (deferred/stockpiled) can be of low quality and our stocking rate is limited.

To help cover the costs of management and the public goods (ecosystem services) our meadows provide, Natural England pay £200/ha plus a £35/ha supplement for grazing with traditional breed livestock.